



Yosemite Village Interim Parking Improvements

What is this project about?

In keeping with the actions outlined in the *Yosemite Valley Plan*, an interim project is needed to improve the visitor experience and park operations at the Yosemite Village main day visitor parking area. The proposed project would improve the parking area, traffic circulation, tour bus loading and unloading, shuttle stop, and visitor facilities. The existing day visitor parking area is poorly laid out, resulting in reduced parking efficiency, traffic congestion, and pedestrian and vehicle safety hazards. This interim project addresses existing day visitor parking capacity in the interim until out-of-Valley parking is constructed per the *Yosemite Valley Plan*. The National Park Service is preparing an environmental assessment that will evaluate proposed improvements.

Where is the parking area located?

The main day visitor parking area in Yosemite Valley is located south of Yosemite Village and east of Sentinel Bridge, between the Merced River and Northside Drive. This area has hosted a variety of uses over the last 100 years, and has historically been referred to as Camp 6.

What are some of the issues with the existing parking area?

In its current condition, the operation of the Yosemite Village parking area is labor-intensive and requires costly ongoing maintenance. During peak visitation, park staff must be on hand to direct traffic through the inefficient and haphazard labyrinth of parking spaces. Additionally, during the dry summer and fall months, the unpaved surfaces cause problems with dust. The unpaved portions of road are also prone to potholes that require constant maintenance.

Pedestrian circulation, traffic congestion, and safety hazards are recurring problems at this parking area. After parking, visitors must travel through two legs of an L-shaped cross-walk, crossing first at busy Northside Drive, then over to Village Drive to reach visitor facilities. It is difficult for visitors to find the proper walking paths to Yosemite Village and to find their vehicles when returning to the parking lot. Traffic operations are further congested by the confusing offset alignment of the parking lot entrance road relative to the Northside Drive/Village Drive intersection. The configuration of this intersection and the high volumes of pedestrians crossing all legs of the intersection create confusing—and at times dangerous—situations for pedestrians and drivers. Although incremental improvements have been implemented each year, major inefficiencies for parking, maintenance, and circulation continue.

Over the years, the park has placed temporary facilities in the parking area to provide basic visitor services during peak visitation. Each summer, a temporary restroom facility is put into operation, but it is undersized, has poor circulation, and becomes uncomfortably hot during summer months. A portable “Yurt” provides basic visitor information during hours when it is staffed by Yosemite Association volunteers. However, these temporary facilities do not contribute to a quality visitor experience, particularly during non-peak season when the facilities are closed.

Why move tour bus operations to Yosemite Village?

This project proposes relocating tour bus loading and unloading to the Yosemite Village area. As called for in the *Yosemite Valley Plan*, the area formerly used for tour bus loading is being restored to natural conditions as part of the improvements at Lower Yosemite Fall. Tour buses currently load/unload in a portion of the Yosemite Lodge parking lot, but that area must be vacated for improvements at Yosemite Lodge scheduled for May 2005. Since most visitor facilities are located in the Yosemite Village area, the *Yosemite Valley Plan* identified it as the most suitable and centralized place for loading and unloading tour bus passengers.

What are some of the possible components included in the project?

This project will include some or all of the following components:

- Parking for day visitors, including recreational vehicles and handicapped persons
- Tour bus loading and unloading facilities
- Roadway realignments to improve vehicular and pedestrian traffic circulation and safety
- Pedestrian/bicycle paths to improve pedestrian/bicycle traffic circulation and safety
- Valley shuttle bus service operations and facilities
- Interpretation facilities, including wayfinding signs
- Other visitor facilities, such as restrooms and picnic areas

What is the schedule for the project?

Public scoping on the project was held from February 18 to March 18, 2004. An environmental assessment is expected to be released in late summer 2004. If approved, construction would begin in early 2005 and would be complete by the end of the year.

How does this project comply with other park plans?

The proposed project area is within the Merced Wild and Scenic River corridor and is zoned for park operations and administration and visitor day use under the guidance of the *Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan*. No development associated with the project shall occur within the River Protection Overlay for the Merced River. Impacts to the Outstandingly Remarkable Values of the Merced River will be analyzed as part of the environmental assessment.

The *Yosemite Valley Plan* calls for construction of a consolidated day-visitor parking facility in Yosemite Village/Camp 6 and for construction of a visitor center and transit center in this area. The plan calls for Yosemite Village to become the focus of educational and interpretive opportunities for visitors. The Yosemite Village Interim Parking Improvements will help achieve these goals, and particularly to enhance visitor experiences, by developing efficient visitor parking facilities, tour bus loading and unloading facilities, and associated circulation improvements to improve visitor access to and through the visitor facilities concentrated in Yosemite Village. Although this is an interim project designed to maintain the existing day visitor parking capacity until the *Yosemite Valley Plan* can be fully implemented, the uses and locations are consistent with the *Yosemite Valley Plan*.

Public Participation

Here are some ways to get involved in this planning effort:

- Review project information on the park's web site at www.nps.gov/yose/planning.
- Attend one of the park's monthly open houses and speak with project managers (open house schedule available on the park's web site, see above).
- Review and comment on the environmental assessment when it becomes available late this summer.
- Add your name to the park planning mailing list to receive planning-related information. You can also submit your email address to receive the park's electronic newsletter.

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